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Book Notices.

The American Drawing-book—A Manual for the Amateur, &c. By J. G. Chapman, N. A. J. S. REDFIELD: New York.

THERE is very little that a teacher can do to instruct a young artist either by books or otherwise. The instructions given by masters only pertain to the merely technical. Thought cannot be imparted, and on it depends everything essentially artistic. The motto of Chapman's Drawing-book, any one who can learn to write can learn to draw, expresses well the nature of all that can be imparted by a teacher to a pupil. To train the hand to follow the will readily is the whole aim of execution, and this is the same both in writing and in drawing. In passing beyond that, all positive interference by the master becomes dangerous, as destroying the freedom of perception, essential to originality. The master may do something by following the pupil, and extricating him from the dilemmas his inexperience may involve him in; but this is a negative interference, and implies that the pupil does act for himself in all that he does, since he must have thought, in order to have been wrong.

We too often confuse mere drawing with Art, that Ideal—and in consequence many are deterred from the former, by the consciousness that they have not the faculties necessary to the appreciation of the latter. Chapman's strong common sense, and his peculiar excellence in all that pertains to the mechanical of Art, fitted him peculiarly to become an instructor in Drawing, while his knowledge of Art will prevent him from attempting to impart that which no man can acquire from another. There is an useful lecture in his introduction:

Any one who can learn to write can learn to draw; and, as writing is not taught to those only who are destined to become authors, but as forming an essential part of general education, so is drawing equally important to others besides professional artists. To write—to draw a form or figure that shall be recognized as the representative of a letter or word, is one thing; and to be able to design, draw, or write such forms, upon principles of grace and accuracy—to understand the Art of writing—is another. * * *

Who has ever hesitated to teach a child to write, because it was not intended that he should be an author? How many regard the Art of Drawing as being of no practical importance, as a branch of education, to any but professional artists; and consider it, in its most favorable light, as a mere accomplishment—a pursuit only for the man of leisure? The resources of our schools are often exhausted in "finishing" our youth with "every accomplishment;" laid on so lightly, that, for all real and practical purposes, they are as ephemeral as the gay tints of the painted butterfly. Smatterings of languages, living and dead, are heaped upon them, while the great, universal language, the language of design, is forgotten; or only thought of in the production of some huge "castle and ruins, with a man and a boy with a stick; and a dog"—painted by the teacher, under the scholar's direction, to hang in the parlor, as the veritable, first, and last, and only production, of the latter: who at once assumes, therefrom, an oracular authority in all matters connected with the Fine Arts, and leaves admiring friends in wonder, at what "he might have done, had he not given it up." To such, it may be said, "You have never begun."

It is not only as a beautiful accomplishment, or a source of amusement for leisure moments, that the Art of Drawing should be cultivated. It has its practical uses, in every occupation of life. It opens to all inexhaustible sources of utility, as well as pleasure; practices the eye to observe, and the hand to record, the ever-varying beauty with which nature abounds, and spreads a charm around every object of God's beautiful creation, unfelt and unknown to those who have failed or neglected its

cultivation. It does more: it gives strength to the arm of the mechanic, and taste and skill to the producer, not only of the embellishments, but actual necessities of life. From the anvil of the smith and the workbench of the joiner, to the manufacturer of the most costly productions of ornamental Art, it is ever at hand with its powerful aid, in strengthening invention and execution, and qualifying the mind and hand to design and produce whatever the wants or the tastes of society may require.

Many are deterred from attempting the Art of Drawing, from an idea that they lack capacity, or, what the world calls genius. But, have they ever made the attempt? Let them recall to mind their first steps in knowledge of every kind, and judge not unfairly of their capacity, until they have tried this also. Before they knew their A, B, C, they could tell a man from a dog, by the picture. The impressions of form are the first made on the infant mind; and were it taught, betimes, to trace these impressions on a slate, there would be few in the world incapable of speaking the language of design. The untaught savage thus records the story of his battles; as the traditions of his fathers have come down to him from generation to generation. He directs the traveller on his way, by marks in the sand; tells him, by his rude outline, of mountains and rivers to be passed; and no one can mistake his meaning. Who is there, in civilized life, that may have been familiar with works of Art from childhood, that cannot do this? If he can, he can do more. He possesses the germ within him, and needs only proper cultivation, to bring it forth.

As in other Arts and studies, all cannot expect to be equally perfect, so all cannot expect to rival the master-spirits in the Arts of Design. The work of an artist is that of a lifetime of arduous toil and study. Of the thousands who delight themselves and their friends in music, how few have composed an opera, or even achieved the composition of a single air? Yet, what would the world lose, were none to attempt the cultivation of this refined and charming accomplishment, but those who devoted themselves, exclusively, to its pursuit! Were music neglected as a study by all except those who make it the business of their lives, even they would find few to admire and sympathize with them, in their greatest productions, for want of taste and understanding.

The work is as yet incomplete, only presenting the elementary steps. The parts published include "Primary instructions," "Rudiments of Drawing," "Elements of Geometry," and "Perspective." All treated simply, and yet completely. There is much in the book that will interest those who do not draw, even. There is always something genial and new in an Artist's thoughts on Life and Nature:—

While on the subject of *manner*, it may be expected that something should be said with reference to trees and foliage; but all the rules and recipes, that ever were promulgated, cannot teach one to draw the most simple weed, without a feeling and capacity for the imitation of form. Landscape is too often regarded as a sort of safety-valve, to let off the exuberant efforts of those who are either too idle, or indifferent, to endure the restraint of study. The distortion of a head, or figure, is apparent to every one; but the representation of a tree, may be, in every way, disproportioned and out of character, and still it is a tree, and the producer of it at once an artist. Of all the applications of Art to the purposes of the amateur, landscape occupies a decidedly high place: and its study should, therefore, be begun and prosecuted, with due deference to its importance. Let the learner at once discard the idea that, because he can sketch something to look like nature, his work is done, nor deprive himself of the enjoyment of those privileges that belong to the accomplished observer of the beautiful in nature—so liberally diffused, and available to all. To do this, there is but one course to be followed. Nature beckons to him, and invitingly spreads forth her varied charms, to tempt him to her sunny fields—at once his teacher, and bountiful provider of all that he requires.

The illustrations are among the best things ever published in America, precise in their drawing and execution, and just the things to set before the eyes of a young draughtsman—perplexing him not with tricks of the pencil and falsehoods of effect. The getting up of the whole thing is thorough and admirable in every respect.

It is earnestly desired to impress upon the mind of the student the importance of resting satisfied with nothing short of a thorough comprehension of all as it is placed before him, testing and verifying each and every operation for himself. If less has been said and exemplified on the subject of the elementary principles of the Art, with a more strictly mathematical analysis of these principles, it has been from the fear, based upon experience, that the learner might either wear out his patience in groping through geometrical labyrinths to little useful purpose, for want of consciousness of the ends for which he labored, or else break down in the very outset, as many a one has done before him, in terror of the long and cheerless way that presented itself—through mysterious-looking diagrams and geometrical problems, which not every head, if it has the capacity, possesses the resolution to encounter. Indeed, it may be fairly doubted if ever yet one of the huge volumes of perspective complexities, although full of geometrical learning and research, was gone through in downright earnestness by the student; and if it may have been, it has been to comparatively little practical utility. The study of perspective, like that of all others connected with design, is not to be gone through by the book alone, page by page, to its accomplishment; but its knowledge must be attained by an eye rendered susceptible to the evidences of the truth of its principles, as they are developed in nature, and a mind gradually strengthened to their investigation and application in design, to which it holds the place of an accessory, not that of a primary motive. It comes to the aid of the artist in the development and expression of his Art as do many other branches of knowledge—any one, or all of which, acquired to the utmost extent of learning, would tend but little to constitute an artist, independent of the primary and mere leading qualifications requisite for the imitative and inventive Art; as the poetry of thought precedes the measured line and its rules of harmonious expression, and as no rules of prosody can make a poet, or gift the mind with power of expansion to the bright and privileged world of fancy, yet is their assistance indispensable to reduce to order the pictures of its gathering or creation.

Here the artist-student of perspective might, perhaps, be safely left to pursue his course alone, and to rely upon his own judgment in following out the elementary principles of the Art in their various and endless applications, as all that remains is chiefly based upon merely geometrical operations. To meet every case that may occur by an example, would swell our work to more volumes than there are pages at our disposal; and, after all, if such could be done, it would be scarcely worth the pains, and its place upon the book-shelf might be far better and more usefully occupied. Besides, the artist and draughtsman should hold the Art in his mind, and eye, and hand—ready, quick as the thought or the impression, to give it utterance and expression. To be thus learned it is not necessary to be forever bending over dull diagrams and untangling knotty problems. The field of Art is too wide, its privileges too free for this. The artist's best school is abroad, in the bright, beautiful world of nature, for ever developing some new subject for admiration, and tempting his imitation. Nothing on which his eye can rest that does not teach him lessons of his Art, when once his perceptions are awakened and trained to their comprehension. Endless as may be his work of knowledge, so are his resources; while others plod on a duller way through life, he reaps while he sows, and bright blossoms mingle their perfume with the ripened fruit, which repays his labors and makes glad his toil.